



Countermeasure

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When **Safety** Becomes **Personal**

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Is Perception Reality?

In the opening month of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), I served in theater as an assistant division commander for the 82d Airborne Division. Four days after “G-day,” I had the opportunity to visit a company of Soldiers from an Apache Longbow battalion that had been in a difficult battle south of Baghdad. Several aircraft in the company were damaged beyond immediate repair and not all of the mission’s objectives were met. As a senior leader, I was interested to learn the reasons for the mission’s outcome.

The platoon leader who’d led the first aircraft into the battle was particularly frustrated. Here’s how he described the mission: The joint suppression of enemy air defense (J-SEAD) was fired too early and was, therefore, ineffective; and close air support (CAS) was unavailable during the mission time window. The lack of synchronization gave the enemy time to react, creating a hornet’s nest directly around the Apaches’ battle positions and routes of flight. I asked him, “What do you think we need to do differently?”

“Sir,” the lieutenant stated bluntly, “we need to start by disbanding the Safety Center!” The lieutenant had no way of knowing that I would soon become the commanding general of the Army Safety Center.

Did the Safety Center cause a lack of J-SEAD synchronization or establish CAS allocations for the night? Obviously not. However, the lieutenant felt that so many good home-station training events had been cancelled or watered down “in the name of safety” that the unit was not ready to conduct difficult combat operations. He felt the Army was more worried about fratricide than about killing the enemy. He believed we practiced “risk aversion” rather than “risk management.” The platoon leader attributed the mission’s planning failures to an institutional attitude, and he felt the roots of that attitude began at the Safety Center.

That was his perception ... but is it reality? That Apache platoon leader’s words have echoed through my head for the last 10 months as I’ve traveled across our Army. If you listen closely, you will hear echoes of “safety” as a bad word among our junior leaders. They feel safety is a constraint rather than a combat multiplier for mission accomplishment. “It slows them down,” “It doesn’t allow them to train on the razor’s edge,” and in combat, “There just isn’t time for it.” Since many junior leaders feel “safety” is a bad word, it’s not being embraced down where the rubber meets the road.

Little in life is truly black or white—perception or reality depends on where you sit. We must work hard to balance the risks of our profession. As leaders get more “time on task” their experience allows them to see a bigger picture, one a lieutenant or squad leader cannot yet see. A lieutenant may complain when a battalion commander orders the use of seatbelts during convoy operations through an urban area in Iraq or Afghanistan. The lieutenant believes that wearing seatbelts reduces his Soldiers’ warrior spirit and mobility should the convoy come under attack. But the battalion commander knows that even in theater, the risk of dying during a rollover caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) or by speeding is significantly greater than the risk of not being able to exit a vehicle under enemy fire. Since the normal response to coming under attack is to drive faster and use mobility, the risk of rollover is even greater.

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SEATBELTS
Seatbelts

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is even greater."**

The battalion commander sees the bigger picture—he wants to accomplish the mission and bring the Soldiers back safely. However, if the battalion commander fails to make the lieutenant understand the bigger picture, the lieutenant will walk away viewing safety as simply a deterrent to the mission. When junior leaders don't embrace safety, they won't enforce safety during the 23 hours of the day when senior leaders aren't watching. This is what I see happening across our Army.

In last month's issue, I stated that the actions of our junior leadership would determine the success of the Army Safety Campaign. Inspiring junior leaders will require senior leaders to engage them with discussion, education, and mentorship. It will take both good old-fashioned leadership and some out-of-the-box thinking. The Army Safety Team has some great tools to help—check out our Web site at <https://safety.army.mil>. Our Web-based tools can help coach leaders on how to conduct their challenging missions safer and in a manner the digital generation will find interesting and intuitive. In another initiative, U.S. Army-Alaska (USARAK) recently held a junior leader safety council to establish "bottom-up" initiatives and a peer-teaching

program. This might be worth a shot in your unit.

The Chief of Staff, Army, GEN Peter Schoomaker, emphasizes training hard and to standard. He doesn't want our Soldiers to be risk averse, so let's get the job done. Embed risk management in all you do. Make standards and discipline your control measures. Question things that appear to hide behind "safety" or that inhibit realistic training, because in combat you'll fight like you've trained.

The current accident trend is on course to be our worst in 10 years. To curb that trend, we must stimulate a culture change among our Soldiers and junior leaders. We must do more than just teach safety—we must inspire it. ★

**Our Army is at War.
Be Safe and Make it Home!**


BG Joe Smith

SAFETY SENDS

From the Director of Army Safety

“Safety Sends” is a new Army Safety Campaign Plan initiative to help keep senior leaders abreast of current accidents and their impact on combat readiness. Composed weekly by the Director of Army Safety, BG Joe Smith, “Safety Sends” is provided to general officers and features summaries of accident trends and snapshots of accidents that occurred the week before, including contributing factors. In future issues, *Countermeasure* and *Flightfax* will feature condensed “Safety Sends” messages.

We are an Army at war, and that Army is a fast-moving train with over a quarter-million Soldiers moving in one direction or another. Every Soldier and piece of equipment in this fight counts. Fatalities continue to rise, and we have two enemies in this war: The human enemy and accidents. Since World War I over half of our wartime losses have been due to accidents—not the enemy. As professionals we study the art of war in great detail, but that study is focused only on the enemy, not on accidents.

The Acting Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Army, and Sergeant Major of the Army fully recognize the importance of engaging both enemies. The strategic message is clear: The most potent weapons against accidental losses are leader involvement and accountability across the force. Each of us must commit to the fight and get the message down to first-line leaders and individual Soldiers. Conducting small operations safely with junior leadership is our challenge, and nothing we do will be effective unless we make safety personal.

Over the last six months, the Army Safety Center has made

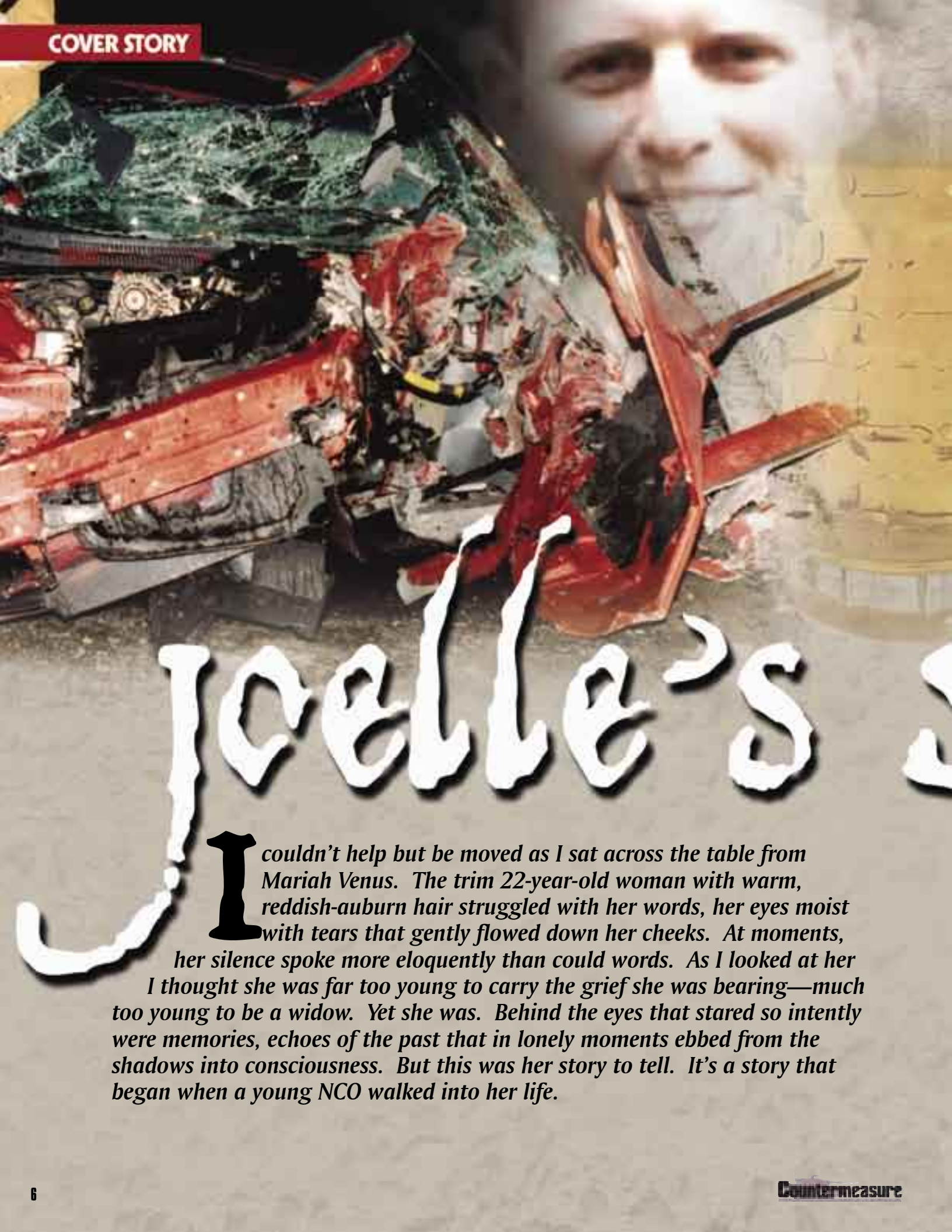
great strides to develop and refine digital tools to attack this undeclared enemy. This is the first step in making the study of accidental losses easier, and an integral part of our culture. Visit our Web site at <https://safety.army.mil>. First-line supervisors should use these tools in their risk management process. The Risk Management Information System (RMIS)—the Safety Center’s accident database—recently became more accessible than ever to supervisors wanting vital accident statistics, and getting a password for the protected RMIS site is now at the touch of a button. All you need is an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account. The new “Login” link found on the Safety Center Web site uses your AKO password for all our tools, including the new Accident Reporting Automation System (ARAS), and the Army Safety Management Information System-1 (ASMIS-1). Now you don’t have to remember another user name and password!

Privately owned vehicle (POV) accidents continue to be one of our greatest challenges in reducing fatalities. The POV module of ASMIS-1 has been on the street for just over two months and already has 7,700 registered users and


over 5,000 risk assessments on file. We recently reviewed 109 POV accidents and found that only one user had been involved in a crash, and he was a passenger! This shows the system is connecting with the digital generation. If you really want to make a difference in your formation, mandate that a printed copy of your Soldiers’ POV assessments be attached to leave and pass forms. The ASMIS-1 system can be accessed through the Safety Center’s Web site at <https://safety.army.mil/asmis1/>.

We have the right focus on the main operations, but we aren’t getting it right in our supporting efforts—those small convoys and single-ship aircraft missions. We haven’t adequately prepared our junior leaders, who must execute these missions with the right skills, education, and access to knowledge to make good risk decisions. Focusing on pre-mission planning, troop-leading procedures, and pre-combat checks is critical. Thanks for taking the time to hang in there. We are at your disposal and will help in any and every way to protect the force as we fight the Global War on Terrorism.★

BG Joe Smith
Director of Army Safety



Joelle's I couldn't help but be moved as I sat across the table from Mariah Venus. The trim 22-year-old woman with warm, reddish-auburn hair struggled with her words, her eyes moist with tears that gently flowed down her cheeks. At moments, her silence spoke more eloquently than could words. As I looked at her I thought she was far too young to carry the grief she was bearing—much too young to be a widow. Yet she was. Behind the eyes that stared so intently were memories, echoes of the past that in lonely moments ebbed from the shadows into consciousness. But this was her story to tell. It's a story that began when a young NCO walked into her life.



"He had just gotten off a flight coming back, I believe, from Kuwait ... he, with a couple of his rugby buddies, showed up at Hoss's Deli wearing a sarong and a T-shirt. He was full of himself and had a smile that would eat you alive," Mariah recalled.

Staff Sergeant Joseph L. Venus—"Joelle" to his friends—was a 28-year-old Air Force computer software designer assigned to Langley AFB, VA. He was too busy celebrating that day to notice Mariah, who was working as a bartender at Hoss's, but that would change. Joelle captained a rugby team sponsored by Hoss's and came back a couple of months later to set up a team party. He invited Mariah, and the party turned into their first date. Their "chemistry" worked immediately.

"I guess the term 'love at first sight' described us ... we were both incredibly enamored with each other from the first time we sat down and talked," she said.

Joelle fell in love and proposed to her on the one-year anniversary of their first date. Mariah accepted, and they were quietly married on April 16, 2000, in Hampton,

her e-mails throughout the day.

That day he tracked down a couple of old friends he'd served with previously. Back then they'd all been confirmed bachelors, but now two were married and the third was engaged. Excited, Joelle called Mariah and asked if he could go out for happy hour at Philly's Pub and Sub in Newport News and meet some friends.

"I told him it was fine," Mariah said. "He asked me if I was angry and I told him, 'No, we still have a weekend to spend together.'"

He came home, changed clothes, and asked Mariah if she would come get him after happy hour should he need a ride. "I told him I would," she said.

He borrowed Mariah's 1997 Chevrolet Camaro and drove to Philly's, arriving around 7:30 p.m. He liked his beer at room temperature, so he ordered three, drinking one while letting the others get warm. He talked with his friends about going boating the next day. Around 9:30 p.m. he called Mariah and asked if he could stay a bit longer.

"I told him that was fine and to call me if he needed a ride. He said he would, and that he loved me," Mariah recalled.

She went to sleep, expecting to hear from Joelle later on. But it wasn't until after midnight that he left Philly's.

At 12:36 a.m. Virginia State Trooper Wendell K. Cosenza pulled his cruiser behind a concrete Jersey barrier used to separate an under-construction carpool lane from the fast lane on westbound Interstate 64. His rearward-facing radar measured the speed of cars approaching from behind. He sat there quietly watching the flickering numbers.

Five minutes later Mariah awoke in fear, thinking someone was in the hallway. She woke her two dogs, a rottweiler and a husky-shepherd mix, and called out in the darkness—but the house was silent. And Joelle was not home.

At the same moment, 12:41 a.m., Cosenza's radio suddenly crackled. The dispatcher's message shook him—a motorist had reported a wrong-way driver in the fast lane. Cosenza immediately pulled from behind the barrier into the fast lane.

Three miles separated the trooper from

story

BOB VAN ELSEBERG
Managing Editor

VA. Within three weeks they bought a house, a fixer-upper in a quiet residential area of Newport News, VA. They were always hosting Joelle's friends from his unit, so on the Fourth of July a bunch came over for a barbecue. The party went late, but since they'd both arranged to take five days off, they felt they had plenty of time to do things together. It was disappointing when their phone rang Thursday morning and Joelle had to go to work. Mariah decided to stay home to clean the house. Joelle kept in touch by sending

the wrong-way driver—Joelle. Confused and thinking Joelle was across the highway in the eastbound lane, Cosenza raced to catch up with him. Perhaps he could flash his lights across the median or run his siren to somehow alert Joelle. As he raced down the highway he remembered how a wrong-way drunk driver hit another car earlier that year on I-64, killing its pregnant driver and two of her three passengers. Cosenza could see it all happening again.

But as he sped down I-64, something was terribly wrong. In an instant, he realized his horrifying mistake. The glare of oncoming headlights flashed through his windshield.

“Oh my God ... he’s a couple hundred yards away and he’s coming right at me!” jolted through his mind.

He had nowhere to go. A tractor-trailer blocked him on the right and a line of Jersey barriers blocked his lane on the left. He realized there was only one choice. Reacting quickly, he stopped his cruiser in the fast lane just past where the Jersey barriers ended. He’d use his vehicle as a collision barrier, taking the head-on impact to protect the drivers behind him. He fully expected to die.

The cruiser’s dash video recorded the events. A driver in the fast lane ahead of Cosenza saw the oncoming Camaro and braked and swerved

to the right. Cosenza turned on his siren—his last hope for alerting Joelle. As the Camaro approached, Cosenza realized it would not hit him head on—it was in the uncompleted carpool lane to his left. As Joelle’s headlights flashed by on the left, Cosenza watched in his rearview mirror. Going almost 80 mph, the Camaro hit the end of a Jersey barrier, spun 180 degrees, and wound up against the median. The impact toppled the Jersey barrier onto its side and pushed it part way into the fast lane. Parts of the Camaro were strewn across the highway. Cosenza began grabbing flares from his trunk and throwing them onto the highway to warn approaching drivers. He then turned his attention to Joelle.

“Hey buddy, are you awake? Hey, hey, talk to me!”

The driver’s side door was open. Joelle hadn’t worn his seatbelt and was lying partly outside the vehicle. He was unconscious and barely breathing.

Cosenza keyed his radio, “Chesapeake—1050 PI (accident with personal injuries)—call Hampton and tell them to expedite!”

Ambulances from Newport News and Hampton got there quickly. Fortunately, the crash happened near the exit for the Riverside Regional Medical Center, which had the closest level-one trauma unit. The troopers couldn’t find any identification on Joelle, but searched the car and found a marriage certificate. The woman’s name on the marriage certificate matched the

“If you’ve had a few **drinks** and you’re walking out to your car telling yourself,

**‘I can make it h
this time,’**
remember, you’re

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name on the vehicle registration, so the troopers assumed she was Joelle's wife. But there was only one way to be certain—someone had to go and talk to her. At 3 a.m., Trooper Vernon Smith knocked on Mariah's door.

She recalled, "When I first heard it, I thought it was Joelle ... I couldn't figure out why he was banging on the door, unless someone brought him home and he didn't have his keys, so I went to the door and opened it. A state trooper was standing there. He told me they thought my husband had been in an accident and that I needed to go to the hospital. He asked me if I was OK to take myself and I said I was, and he left."

When Mariah arrived she saw a man lying on a gurney with his back toward her. His hair was about the same color as Joelle's, and she desperately wanted talk to him. It took a few minutes before the hospital staff convinced her it wasn't Joelle. "Finally, they sat me down and explained he was in the trauma unit. They said he'd been in a very bad accident," Mariah said.

Cosenza had arrived at the hospital and met Mariah. A doctor took them both to the family room, a small room next to the emergency room. The news he gave Mariah was crushing.

"He told me Joelle's brain no longer worked to tell him to breathe—there was no way he was ever going to wake up," she said.

Mariah and Cosenza walked to Joelle's room. The trooper had to be sure of Joelle's identification and also knew Mariah needed someone with her at that moment. In the room Mariah met the trauma nurse who'd taken care of Joelle since he'd arrived. "She told me I could

talk to him and hold his hand, and then explained the doctors would be coming soon to talk to me,"

Mariah explained.

Mariah now had a very difficult phone call to make. She and Joelle had married in secret—not even Joelle's parents knew. Tragically, the first time she would talk to her mother-in-law was to tell her the horrible news of what had happened. Joelle's unit also needed to be notified, so Cosenza called security forces at Langley AFB. Within minutes, Joelle's supervisors were getting calls at home. Senior Master Sergeant Ryan Petersen awoke to his ringing phone. On the other end was Joelle's direct supervisor, Technical Sergeant Victor Overton.

"Vic' told me Joelle had been in a bad accident and was on life support. He said he wasn't sure what the outcome was going to be," Petersen said.

Petersen quickly dressed and drove to the hospital. There he met Mariah and found out she was Joelle's wife. He also met Joelle's commander and first sergeant. The three of them stayed with Mariah throughout the night. The next morning, Petersen drove to Joelle's unit to tell them what had happened.

"I don't think anyone said a word," Petersen said. "It was tough. We had a couple of females who worked in the office and they cried when they realized how serious it was."

Joelle's commander released the members of his unit so they could go to the hospital and see their friend. Mariah was touched by their response.

"The flood of people that came in that Friday was just incredible," she said. "He was in the cardiac intensive care unit, and the hospital broke all the rules for us. There was no such thing as 'visiting hours.' Anybody that wanted to see him could."

As the day wore on, it became apparent Joelle would never recover. At 6:30 p.m.—23 hours after he'd shown up for happy hour—he was declared brain dead. Joelle was a registered organ donor, but the decision to approve the organ-harvesting surgeries—to accept her husband's life was over—was one Mariah would not make alone. Joelle's mother arrived at the hospital that evening and met Mariah. They both felt Joelle would want his death to bring hope to others. Together, they signed the paperwork

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talking to a

unk

to approve the surgeries. Later, Mariah went to Joelle's room to be alone with him—to lie next to him one last time and hold him. Words cannot describe what she felt in those empty, agonizing moments.

Joelle was taken into surgery at 9 a.m. the next day. There was nothing more Mariah could do, so she went home. "They called me about noon to let me know it was done," she said.

Joelle's friends remembered him during the days that followed. On Monday they held a wake at a local funeral home. The next day there was a memorial service at the Langley AFB chapel, followed by a full honor guard at Airpower Park. On Wednesday, Mariah flew to Milwaukee to give Joelle's family the urn holding his ashes.

After Joelle's death, his friends often met with Mariah, retelling his jokes, remembering his sense of humor, and holding onto memories of a friend they'd lost.

But in the end is the awful question—why did someone who had a plan to get home safely never make it? Was it because he was a habitual drunk driver? Those who knew him best said he knew better than that.

Was it because his friends at Philly's failed to look out for him? That's a question they've asked themselves countless times. However, when they left Philly's they had no reason to believe he wouldn't call Mariah for a ride. He'd always done that before.

Was it because Philly's served him alcohol when he was already intoxicated? According to Cosenza, Joelle's blood-alcohol content was .23 that night—nearly three times the legal limit for intoxication. A hearing following the accident led to a temporary suspension of Philly's liquor license.

Yet, in the end, Joelle didn't die because of what other people did or didn't do. He died because he had a plan to be safe, but chose to ignore it. Alcohol, Cosenza believes, played the key role in that fatal decision.

He explained, "Before alcohol changes your ability to drive—your physical hand-eye

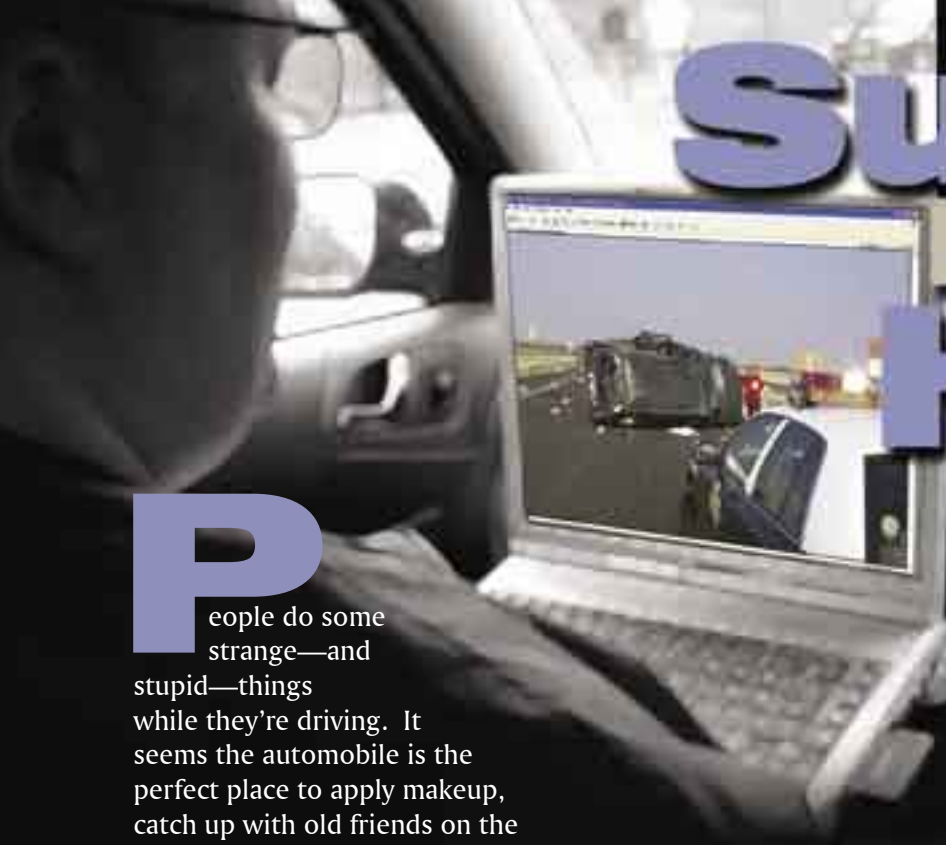
"Alcohol not only steals the lives of its victims, it steals the dreams and hopes of those who are left behind."



coordination—it affects your reasoning and your thought process. If you've had a few drinks and you're walking out to your car telling yourself, 'I can make it home this time,' remember, you're talking to a drunk ... you'll talk yourself into risking it by saying, 'It'll never be me—I'll make it home. It's always someone else.'"

Joelle's story ended much too soon. He was outgoing and had a personality that drew others like a magnet. He was an exceptionally talented NCO, and his unit was grooming him for promotion and greater responsibility. His story should have gone on—he should have enjoyed a full life with Mariah. But Joelle's story is ended, and in the shadow of that night Mariah lives with a reality so many other families have learned through tragedy: Alcohol not only steals the lives of its victims, it steals the dreams and hopes of those who are left behind. 🚗

This article was revised from one written by the author for the Summer 2002 edition of *Road & Rec* magazine. Contact the author at (334) 255-2688, DSN 558-2688, or e-mail robert.vanelsberg@safetycenter.army.mil



Surfing Down the Highway

JULIE SHELLEY
Staff Editor

People do some strange—and stupid—things while they're driving. It seems the automobile is the perfect place to apply makeup, catch up with old friends on the cell phone, eat lunch, or even perform personal hygiene. I spend about as much time in my car as I do in my house, so I'm guilty of a few roadway sins too. However, I recently witnessed a highway juggling act that easily could make any "stupid human trick" look like child's play.

My family and I were on our way home from Panama City Beach, FL, where we had spent a relaxing weekend full of sunshine and good food. Our route back home was a major four-lane highway that winds through several small towns. The speed limit goes from 65 mph to 45, then 35, in only a few hundred feet in these cities. There are also stoplights and medians with traffic crossing the highway in all directions. This route is used by spring breakers and families all over the nation, because no interstate runs directly to the beaches in and around Panama City.

We were about halfway home when a minivan with out-of-state license plates pulled up to our


side. At first glance, nothing seemed out of the ordinary—just a nice family on their way home from the beach. There were two or three kids in the back, Mom was sleeping up front, and Dad was driving. Dad was also working on his laptop computer.

That's right. This man, whose wife and kids trusted him to get them home in one piece, was typing on his laptop while hurtling down the road at more than 70 mph. His computer was propped up on his lap, with the screen resting on the steering wheel. I watched with a mixture of fascination and horror as Dad continued through town after town, speed zone after speed zone, still working on the laptop.


Dad finally put the computer away about 45 minutes later. Mom was still asleep in the front seat. The kids were still playing in the back. And they were still in one piece. They were lucky.

The highway is full of dangers that are hard enough to tackle when you're fully aware of your surroundings, much less

checking your e-mail or stock performance. What would that man have done if someone had pulled out in front of him or stopped suddenly? What would he have done if all the traffic lights weren't green? Would he have even noticed until the crash? Probably not, but he'd be sure to feel the pain of harming his wife and kids. And I'm sure his laptop—which seemed to be the most precious thing in the world to him at the time—would've been smashed to pieces by the airbag had he crashed.

Distracted driving contributes to tens of thousands of vehicle accidents and hundreds of fatalities every year. These needless deaths could have been prevented if someone had just paid attention to the task at hand—DRIVING. The CD player, lunch, a phone call, and yes, even e-mail can wait until you're stopped safely. That family probably was going to stop for lunch or a bathroom break within a couple of hours, but Dad couldn't wait. Be smarter than him—pay attention and drive safe. Your family and your Army are counting on you. —

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Every Friday, our company commander would bring us all together for his standard safety briefing. He gave the same boring speech week after week. I'd heard it so many times that I could say the words before he spoke. And this was just the beginning of what seemed to be a continuous echo.

After the company commander was finished, the first sergeant stood in front of us and basically gave the same message. My platoon sergeant would follow him by saying the same thing; however, he would put his spin on it by telling us his war story about a previous accident. He'd finish with, "If I hadn't been wearing my seatbelt, I wouldn't be here telling this story today." But that, too, would be repeated every week, as if none of us were present the week before. This entire charade

We Finally

took about 45 minutes to complete. I can remember thinking those safety briefs were a huge waste of time.

One week the brief was a little different, though. Our unit was conducting a training exercise at East Range, the Army's primary training spot at Schofield Barracks, HI. Our commander called for an informal formation while we were eating dinner and started to reprimand us for not wearing our Kevlar helmets in military vehicles. He said he was concerned because he didn't seem to be reaching us with his safety messages.

Some Soldiers replied that the helmets hurt their heads. At that point, we'd been wearing them for four days. They also complained that the helmets were always falling down into their eyes, obstructing their vision.

Undeterred by this testimony, the commander reinforced his previous position and promised to punish anyone caught without

their Kevlar. I was really confused because, at that time, our company had a pretty good safety record. We hadn't experienced any major accidents or injuries during the entire year I was there. No one was caught without their Kevlar during the last week of that field problem.

Our next training exercise was a few months later. We'd been in the field for about two weeks, and everyone was looking forward to returning back to the garrison environment. Even though we still had a week to go, you could feel the complacency creeping in. Everyone seemed to have a careless attitude.

The company set up a racetrack formation and made evenly spaced laps around it for a night smoke mission. This was a routine mission that we'd practiced numerous times during this and previous field exercises. About an hour into the mission, I saw a smoke vehicle veer off the track and head aimlessly across a



**Wear Your
Kevlar Helmet**

Got It

**Wear Your
Seatbelt**

ERIC A. WASHINGTON
CP-12 Safety Intern
Fort Riley, KS

field. I didn't think it was a big deal. We finished the mission and headed back to our camp.

The relaxation and rest didn't last long, however. Later that night we learned a Soldier in our platoon had died in that runaway vehicle. A subsequent accident investigation revealed that he'd struck his head on the smoke control panel, causing the fatal injury. Stunned, we were briefed that if he'd worn his Kevlar, it would have saved his life.

I don't know why it took such a tragedy to confirm what our superiors had been telling us about wearing our Kevlars and seatbelts. That accident changed the unit's whole attitude—our sergeant's old war stories were now our reality. We finally got it, but we learned our lesson the hard way.

Soldiers today aren't wearing their helmets or seatbelts in Iraq because they're afraid they won't be able to exit their vehicles quickly if they come under fire. Yet, too many of our Soldiers are dying in rollover accidents in theater—deaths that could have been prevented if they'd only worn their seatbelt or helmet. Pay attention when your commander and other leaders give their safety brief. You'd rather be that platoon sergeant telling your war story years down the road than in the grave with nobody to listen. 🚗

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The Kid Was Right

HARVEY V. JONES III
CP-12 Safety Intern
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As a retired senior NCO, I've had the opportunity to influence many Soldiers over the years. Sometimes, however, my junior Soldiers impressed me instead of the other way around. One young Soldier affected the rest of my career and saved my life by insisting on rehearsing rollover battle drills.

I don't remember his name, but I do know he was a private first class that went by the call sign "Fatcat." Even though PFC Fatcat was subordinate in rank to me, he had the courage to tell me I was wrong. He insisted that we rehearse rollover battle drills, and I didn't want to. I really didn't see the significance in what he said; after all, he was just a kid! Grudgingly we rehearsed the drills, but I thought all the while, "Will we ever really use this?"

First, you must understand that I was raised in the Light Infantry. I was stationed at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, which was my first (and only) assignment to a

mechanized unit. Our "opposing forces" (OPFOR) mission was to replicate the tactics, techniques, and procedures used by threat forces against "U.S. forces" in a tactical war-playing scenario where real equipment was used.

As the scout platoon sergeant, I was responsible for the maintenance and tactical replication of a combat reconnaissance platoon. Our primary task was to gather intelligence information to support the regiment's mission, which was accomplished by entering the area of operations two to four days before the motorized rifle regiments.

At first, this particular mission showed signs of success. The scout platoon identified several key "high-payoff" targets from the commander's critical information requirements. We identified items such as wire-mined obstacles, first-line shooters (one company of M1A1 tanks), and one mortar platoon. Once the targets were identified, we

Lessons Learned

- **The way you train is the way you fight, and that training must be performed to standard.**
- **Safety is everyone's job.**
- **Learning can occur at all levels, regardless of rank.**

called in artillery strikes on those positions and sought other targets of opportunity.

Once the attack was underway, our regiment was wreaking havoc on the U.S. forces. Our follow-on mission was to reconnoiter three separate routes and identify the route of least resistance. We piled into our M113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), and I decided to take a northerly route that tended to be difficult during adverse weather conditions. Weather over the previous two days had produced rain mixed with snow.

It wasn't long before we spotted two M1A1 tanks and a platoon of M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles (BFVs). We were trying to call in an artillery strike on their positions when we were spotted by two more BFVs. So we did the only thing OPFOR could do in that situation—we tried to get the hell out of there!

Since it had rained and snowed over the last

couple of days, the terrain was basically mush. The BFVs immediately engaged us as we were attempting to elude them. Outrunning them was not an option; however, I thought that if we took some of the more difficult terrain, we could possibly out-manuever them.


We spotted a trail off to the right and took it, with the BFVs in hot pursuit. I told my driver to keep going along the trail, which curved to the right after about 300 meters, until we lost them. I realized we were moving too fast to negotiate the curve safely, but our only alternative was to pile head-first into some very thick vegetation. The driver also knew we were going too fast and attempted to slow down, but it was too late.

I felt the vehicle sway first to the left and then to the right just before we flipped on our side. As the vehicle started to roll, I heard the driver yelling at me through the intercom to use the quick release button on the track commander's (TC) seat so I wouldn't be crushed. I pressed it and in a split second I was inside the vehicle, which skidded to a stop 300 meters down the trail.

Our APC's main gun was torn from the turret, the TC's hatch was broken, two of four MILES detection belts were ripped off, and the track belts and a sprocket were broken. But we were alive! The driver had a few bumps and bruises, and my leg was pretty banged up. But considering what could have happened, we were very fortunate!

The kid was right. I never would've found that quick release button in time if we hadn't rehearsed those rollover battle drills. It's been 17 years, but I still remember the valuable lessons I learned that day:

- **The way you train is the way you fight, and that training must be performed to standard.**
- **Safety is everyone's job.**
- **Learning can occur at all levels, regardless of rank.**

Knowledge is a two-way street—it was my responsibility to learn from my Soldiers, and theirs to learn from me. I often wonder if some of the recent vehicle fatalities in Operation Iraqi Freedom could've been prevented if those Soldiers had rehearsed rollover battle drills. "Train as we fight" must be more than just words. 

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WOW

Was That a Red Light I Just Ran?

Without thinking, I found myself about to run a red light. For a moment, I thought I was back in Iraq. It took me a second to remember I wasn't—that I was back in the states. My wife, who was sitting next to me, calmly said, "What are you doing? Are you nuts? You're about to cause an accident!" Looking in my rearview mirror, I also noticed a police car. I'd only been back from Iraq for 24 hours and I was about to cause an accident and also get a ticket. I had "cleared" the intersection and was going to roll through.

What had happened? Without thinking, I was still using the bad driving habits I'd adopted while in Iraq. You see, in Iraq you're constantly concerned about the dangers posed by snipers, rocket-propelled grenades, and improvised explosive devices. While driving in Iraq I ignored

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red lights, speed limits, yield signs, and road caution signs. And you can only imagine that my traffic skills had gotten a bit rusty. When I got back, I'd forgotten that these bad driving habits would earn me a traffic ticket from local law enforcement. In Iraq getting a ticket wasn't so bad, at least not compared to having someone sniping at you or detonating an improvised explosive device (IED) next to your vehicle.

For example, when a convoy of vehicles entered an intersection in Iraq—whether or not there were traffic lights—nobody stopped. One vehicle would block traffic so the convoy could keep rolling through. Drivers would never allow

themselves to be boxed in and trapped in a line of vehicles stopped at an intersection.

And speed limits?—there weren't any. Convoy speeds were based upon the threat and weather conditions. Convoys simply passed slower-moving traffic and kept the mission rolling. A swift-moving convoy was safer than a slowed or stopped one.

Getting back to my experience with the red light, it scared me to realize that I, of all people, had made this mistake. After all, wasn't I the one who'd talked to brigade leadership about Soldiers driving safely when they left Iraq and convoyed into Kuwait?

Before any movement into Kuwait, convoy commanders talked to their Soldiers about the bad driving habits they'd formed in Iraq. Leaders stressed that Soldiers would be held accountable for their actions while driving. It was no longer a matter of driving to survive, but rather driving defensively and being safe.

Well there I was, breaking my own rules—and I was the safety guy! I'd sold brigade leaders on the importance of breaking bad driving habits by using the example of the Soldier who returned from Europe and picks up his car at the port. You know what happens next. He gets on the interstate and goes 95 mph because he still thinks he's driving on the autobahn in Germany. Often the wake-up call is a police car's flashing lights and siren. As the Soldier sits in his car the officer looks at him and asks, "What race do you think you're in?" Now I was the one with the flashing lights in the rearview mirror. It was the old embarrassing situation of "physician, heal thyself."

And the lesson learned? As Soldiers redeploy, it's critical they receive classes on POV driving safety and accident prevention. They need to be reacquainted with traffic laws and safe driving skills so they can break the bad habits they acquired in Iraq. Time and mission permitting, having Soldiers review a copy of their state's driving handbook can help them identify any bad driving habits they've formed in Iraq. To keep their Soldiers safe, leaders should cover—as a minimum—the following topics:

- Identifying bad driving habits
- Safe driving skills
- Dealing with road rage
- DUI prevention

- Traffic laws and fines
- Vehicle insurance and the increased costs for unsafe drivers
- Soldiers' accountability to commanders for traffic law violations

Turning off bad habits is hard to do, but leaders can help. By providing safe-driving briefings, and identifying high-risk Soldiers and helping them break their bad driving habits, leaders can help prevent accidents. After all, why bring Soldiers home from combat in Iraq only to lose them to needless, avoidable vehicle accidents?

Be safe, and keep our Army strong and ready. 

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Dust in the

A dead man's bed—I stood and stared at it. A couple of feet to my left, the duty NCO methodically emptied the man's locker. I turned and silently watched. Letters, pictures, uniforms, civilian clothes and shoes—little bits and pieces of a man I never met. You see, he died that night on the dock not far from where the ship was tied up. We missed meeting each other in this life by less than 90 minutes.

No one—least of all this man—expected anything but a few seagulls to be moving on the dock at 10:30 p.m. He rode his motorcycle to one end of the dock, turned around, then grabbed a fistful of throttle and let out the clutch. The quarterdeck watch (the NCO who allows people to leave or board the ship) heard the engine racing and ran to the gangway—but it was too late. The motorcycle streaked by.

For the rider, the lights along the dock must have flashed by in a blur. It was dark to his left where a line of flatbed trailers were parked. As far as he could tell there were no obstructions—nothing to keep him from squeezing every ounce of horsepower from the motorcycle's screaming engine. That is, until a late-working truck driver suddenly backed one of those flatbed trailers into his path. There wasn't time to brake, and he wasn't wearing his helmet. After all, he wasn't expecting trouble.

he Wind

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

The ambulance crew came and took him away before I reported for duty. I didn't see his body, but other crewmembers did. They said you couldn't recognize his face or head as human.

His parents asked that he be cremated and buried at sea, and we honored that request. I stood at attention with the rest of the crew on the deck of our ship as the urn containing his ashes was opened. I watched the faint grey cloud drift into the breeze, then settle onto the water. I wondered, "Is this all that's left of a man—just a little dust?"

During the 33 years that have passed since that night, countless other military men and women have died in needless accidents. CW4 Gregg C. Dunham, an Army National Guard aviator, wrote about a special mission he flew as a Boeing 747 freighter pilot supporting the U.S. Air Force Civilian Reserve Augmentation Fleet (CRAF). Below is an excerpt from his article, "Dispatched to Dover," published in the November 2003 issue of *ARMY*...

"Because it is not unusual for the Air Force to change a [CRAF mission] pattern for its needs, we didn't think much of it until we saw the weight of our cargo. It was such a light load. What's the deal? We decided to give the dispatcher a call to check the accuracy of the load.

"We called the World-Wide Control Center, as they like to be called, and found the rerouting to be correct, with one annotation.

The annotation was "HR," which meant "human remains." The only cargo we were to carry on this flight would be the remains of a U.S. Army captain killed in Iraq and his personal property.

"As we climbed the stairs to reach the main deck of our airplane, we noticed how much higher it stood compared to the usual configuration. As we entered the main deck, we were all soberly choked with emotion at the sight of our cargo. We looked into the cavernous interior of our Boeing 747 freighter to see a U.S. flag-draped casket and a crated box of personal property as our only cargo. All three of us stood there silently for a moment, taken aback at what we saw."

The captain died in Iraq when he grabbed an overhead wire to clear his vehicle. Because the electricity was out in most of the city, he assumed the wire was dead—but it wasn't. He paid the last full measure, not meeting the enemy on the battlefield, but through a terrible, fatal mistake.

In the Bible it says that man was taken from the dust and to it he will someday return. But in between should be a lot of good years—not a life shortened by an accident and reduced to a lonely casket, or just a cloud of dust in the wind. —

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For the majority of Americans, the world changed forever on 11 September 2001. For my 6-year-old grandson Eli, his tragedy began five days earlier. What was supposed to be a fun afternoon turned into a nightmare for Eli and all who loved him.

That afternoon Eli was riding with his grandpa on the back of grandpa's lawn and garden tractor. They were laughing and talking, having a big time as grandpa cut the grass. When grandpa put the mower in reverse, the machine jerked. In a split second Eli was thrown off the back, onto the ground, and under the mower's blade.

Grandpa immediately stopped the machine and got off to help Eli. The blade had mutilated most of his right foot and calf. The doctors said it was

first prosthesis. All Eli wished for was a new foot by Christmas. Fortunately, his wish came true.

Eli is now 9 years old and adjusting considerably better than the adults in his family. He is still the same "fireball" he always was. He is extremely intelligent, funny, and mischievous, and loves performing magic tricks. He plays soccer, swims, roller skates, and rides his bicycle and motorcycle. In June 2003 at Cookeville, TN, Eli became the first known child amputee in the area to race in a Soap Box Derby. He won 8 out of 9 races. These days, Eli tells everyone he is going to be a bull rider when he grows up.

However, we all know he has a lifetime of challenges and battles ahead. He must face these difficulties alone, no matter how much his family wants to protect and shield him. As Eli grows, he

In Just an Insta

a miracle he didn't bleed to death. Two days later I flew back from Germany, landed in Atlanta, GA, and then drove to Erlanger Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, TN. I was immediately informed that Eli's right foot would have to be amputated above his ankle, and his right calf would have to be reconstructed through additional surgeries and skin grafts.

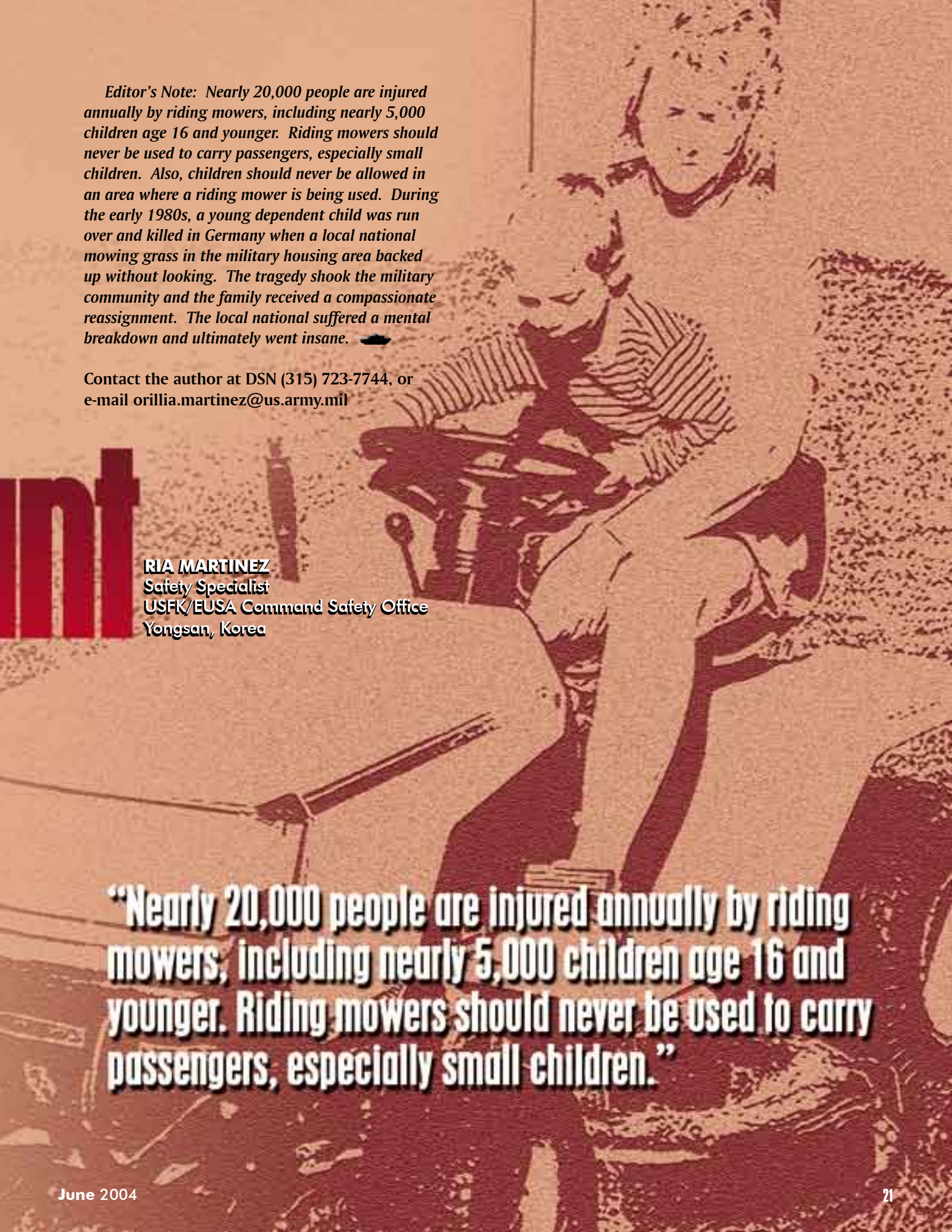
On 11 September 2001 at 7:30 a.m., Eli was taken to surgery for his amputation and the first of six reconstructive surgeries. His parents and our entire family were in the waiting room praying for him. While waiting to hear about Eli's condition, we were told of the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, and about the four hijacked planes. As we listened, we were simultaneously torn by the horrible tragedy of the terrorist attacks and our deep concern for our grandson.

After his amputation, Eli went to the Shriners Hospital in Lexington, KY. Over a 4-month period he underwent five additional reconstructive surgeries and physical therapy before receiving his

will continue to return to the Shriners Hospital every 4 to 6 months to have modifications done to his prosthesis. This will be the easiest and simplest task he will have to endure. It's harder for him when other children make cruel remarks about him not having a foot, but the wisdom he shows in handling that makes me believe he will become much more than a bull rider.

Eli's life is not the only one that has been changed forever and scarred by this accident. Years later, Eli's grandpa is still a broken man. The accident caught him totally by surprise. He said, "I didn't see any harm. We were just having fun."

So many lives in our family have been changed forever since that one horrific moment. We learned it doesn't take a deliberate act of negligence to cause an accident, just ignorance of safety combined with an "it will never happen to me" attitude. We learned the hard way to never think or say "it can't happen to me," because it can. And sometimes "it" happens in just an instant.

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans, is sitting on a green riding mower. She is looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a fence.

Editor's Note: Nearly 20,000 people are injured annually by riding mowers, including nearly 5,000 children age 16 and younger. Riding mowers should never be used to carry passengers, especially small children. Also, children should never be allowed in an area where a riding mower is being used. During the early 1980s, a young dependent child was run over and killed in Germany when a local national mowing grass in the military housing area backed up without looking. The tragedy shook the military community and the family received a compassionate reassignment. The local national suffered a mental breakdown and ultimately went insane. 🚗

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“Nearly 20,000 people are injured annually by riding mowers, including nearly 5,000 children age 16 and younger. Riding mowers should never be used to carry passengers, especially small children.”



tested by the Army. The research, or perhaps lack of research, is why CamelBaks are not being allowed in chemical threat areas. They have not been certified as safe for use in a chemical environment.”

More on CamelBaks

Back in January, we published an article titled “CamelBaks Need Care Too!” That article spurred some discussion regarding the use of the CamelBak personal hydration system (PHS) in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The primary concern was whether or not Soldiers were permitted to use the CamelBak in a location where they might encounter a chemically contaminated environment. An author’s note at the conclusion of our original article said, “The CamelBak system is not safe for use in a nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) environment. In an NBC threat, the standard 1-and 2-quart canteens should be used.”

From the e-mails we’ve received, we felt it would be worthwhile to flesh out this topic, especially as regards NBC-contaminated environments. We asked MAJ Eugene Thurman, an industrial hygienist who serves here at the U.S. Army Safety Center as the Chief, Plans and Programs, to weigh in on this topic.

“There currently are research initiatives on two fronts—the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM), and commercial industry—to provide adequate protection to allow the use of a PHS while in Military Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) Level 4. This would provide Soldiers with hands-free, on-the-move hydration capability during operations in Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) environments.

“CamelBak offers a protective mask adapter kit, which includes a valve and protective mask connector to connect their chemical-resistant reservoir to the mask. The (CamelBak) reservoir’s ability as a barrier to NBC contamination has not been thoroughly

Mea Culpa—We Goofed!

Despite our attempts to be 100 percent accurate in our stories, we’re only 99.9 percent perfect. That .1 percent occasionally bites us, and we have two examples from recent issues.

First, in our lightning safety article titled “Zapped and Zinged” (February 2004 *Countermeasure*), we stated, “If you’re outside and feel your hair standing on end, you might be about to be struck. Fall to your knees, bend forward, and place your hands on your knees. Avoid lying flat on the ground.”

One of our readers, Guy Tewksbury of Fort Jackson, SC, let us know the information we published has been superseded. He wrote, “It’s not recommended that you fall to your knees. The new, approved method is to squat in a crouching position with your hands over your ears.”

We researched this point and found his correction to our story was right on the mark. We wanted to share it before any of you had any “spine-tingling” experiences!

Second, in the article titled “In Danger’s Lane” (March 2004 *Countermeasure*), the author stated, “If high loads block your vision, drive backwards or use ground guides or lane marking pylons. Travel with the load within 4 to 6 feet from the floor whenever possible.”

That recommendation was a “slight” exaggeration. The recommended height is not 4 to 6 feet, but 4 to 6 inches.

News Flash!

Plan for the FY04 Army Safety Conference, 31 August to 2 September 2004. Stay tuned to the July 2004 *Countermeasure* for location and agenda details. 🐪



ACV

Class A (Damage)

- A BFV was destroyed by fire. The fire is suspected to have started in the BFV's turret. All crewmembers evacuated the vehicle without injury.

Class A

- Soldier drowned after his BFV fell about 60 feet down an embankment and landed upside down in a river. The Soldier was a passenger in the BFV, which was performing reconnaissance when the road embankment gave way, causing the vehicle to fall.

- Soldier died after being shot by a BFV coax gun during test-firing. The Soldier suffered wounds to his chest and head.



Personnel Injury

Class A

- A civilian foreign national was killed when a 120 mm mortar round fired by a Soldier fell short of its target. The round instead struck a residential dwelling, killing one civilian and injuring another.

- Soldier collapsed and died during a physical training run. No other details were provided.

- Soldier collapsed during the cool-down period following physical training and later died at a local hospital. No other details were provided.

- Soldier died after reporting chest pain and trouble breathing. The Soldier was playing football during physical training. He later died at a local hospital.

- Soldier was electrocuted when he climbed a metal ladder that made contact with a live wire. The Soldier was laying wire for a telephone line at the time of the accident. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital.

- Soldier died while performing combat diving training. The Soldier was discovered completely submerged and face-down in the water. His flotation device was not activated. The cause of death is unknown.



POV

Class A

- Soldier struck and killed a pedestrian on his way back to post. The Soldier, who was on official duty, was driving his POV when he hit the pedestrian, who was walking in the Soldier's lane.

- Soldier was killed when he failed to negotiate a curve and his vehicle struck two poles and a house. The vehicle then caught fire. The Soldier died at the scene.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle he was riding in contacted black ice, causing the driver to lose control. The vehicle hit a tractor-trailer. The Soldier was not wearing his seatbelt.

- Soldier suffered a permanent total disability when his vehicle struck another vehicle head on. The Soldier was on his way home from weekend drill and fell asleep at the wheel.

- Soldier died when the vehicle he was riding in ran off the roadway's shoulder and overturned. The vehicle's driver, also a Soldier, overcorrected the vehicle, causing it to roll. The driver suffered fractures to his wrist. Both Soldiers were wearing their seatbelts.

- Soldier was killed when his motorcycle ran off the roadway and struck a mailbox and a tree. No other details were provided.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle he was riding in was broadsided by a pickup truck. The Soldier, who was on leave, was ejected from the vehicle.

- Soldier died when his motorcycle struck the rear of an SUV. The motorcycle crossed the roadway's centerline when the Soldier attempted to make a right-hand turn.



AMV

Class A

- A HMMWV carrying two Soldiers and a civilian interpreter swerved and overturned, killing the truck commander (TC). The TC was manning the mounted M60 and was pinned beneath the vehicle.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when the HMMWV he was riding in slid into a canal during a reconnaissance patrol. The cause of death was not reported.

- Soldier died when the HMMWV he was riding in overturned. The HMMWV's driver had swerved to avoid a civilian vehicle and crossed into oncoming traffic, causing the vehicle to roll. The deceased Soldier was acting as the vehicle's gunner.

GOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND?



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